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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000563

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/NEA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS USAID/DCHA/OFDA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS PEACE CORPS HQ
USAID FOR ANE/AA GORDON WEST AND JIM BEVER
MANILA FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA
LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST
FINANCING
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PTER CASC PGOV NP IN

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY, MARCH 22-28

REFERENCE: (A) KATHMANDU 0472
(B) KATHMANDU 0140
(C) KATHMANDU 0358

SUMMARY

1. Progress toward peace talks between the Government of Nepal (GON) and Maoist insurgents remains stalled during King Gyanendra's two-week visit to India. In the interim, Maoist and GON representatives are accusing one another of failing to create a "conducive atmosphere" for talks, and violating the code of conduct agreed upon during the ceasefire (Ref A). Police sources said that Maoist ideologue, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai arrived in Kathmandu on the afternoon of March 28. A Maoist leader in Sindhuli District declared on March 23 that the Maoists were not involved in the brutal murders of Krishna Mohan Shrestha, Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, his wife and bodyguard (Ref B), directly contradicting previous statements by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai that Maoists had accepted responsibility for the murders. In spite of the disagreements, reconstruction efforts have gotten underway with the repair of telephone lines destroyed in past Maoist attacks. End summary.

MAOIST LEADER ARRIVES IN KATHMANDU

2. Police sources said that Maoist ideologue Dr. Baburam Bhattarai arrived in Kathmandu on March 28. Bhattarai was reportedly meeting with a pro-Maoist lawyer in downtown Kathmandu late afternoon.

BLAME GAME OVER PEACE TALKS STANDSTILL

3. As expected, progress toward possible peace talks between Maoist insurgents and the Government of Nepal (GON) remains stalled during King Gyanendra's March 18-30 visit to India. In the interim, the two sides have traded charges that the other is impeding progress by failing to create a "conducive atmosphere" for eventual dialogue. Narayan Singh Pun, Minister of Physical Planning and Works and government-appointed coordinator for the peace talks, accused the Maoists on March 23 of delaying the peace talks by continually increasing their demands. Pun said the insurgents have issued new demands, such as the immediate release of all Maoist detainees from GON custody, as preconditions for peace talks, refusing to even sit for "goodwill talks" unless their demands are met.

4. Maoist leader Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the chief negotiator for the Maoists, repeated charges that the GON is not moving quickly enough toward peace talks, and has failed to follow through on its putative promises to release all prisoners. Prachanda also criticized the GON for its delay in forming a negotiating team two months after the ceasefire was mutually declared, and said that these "irresponsible activities" were raising doubt and suspicion instead of building confidence and trust. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, member of the Maoist negotiating team, said talks would begin once the GON releases all prisoners and withdraws the pending criminal cases against five party leaders, including Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the two most senior Maoist leaders. (Note: The GON has released from detention over thirty lower-ranking Maoist cadres this week, and has released other detainees as well since the announcement of the ceasefire. Minister Pun has explained publicly that prisoners cannot be released without following proper legal procedures, and private lawsuits against Maoist leaders cannot be waived by the GON. End note.)

ACCUSATIONS OF CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS

15. Minister Pun told an audience of human rights activists on March 24 that the GON had received reports of seventy to eighty incidents of ceasefire violations by the Maoists, amounting to what he termed "armed terror." Pun said the reports detail continued extortion attempts; looting; abduction of children, women and several policemen; physical assault on civilians; and the murders of a school teacher and a Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) worker. Maoist spokesman Mahara denied the reports and issued counter-charges accusing the GON of violating the code of conduct by performing illegal searches and arrests, banning organized meetings, and sending army personnel, dressed as civilians, to Maoist programs in order to spy on Maoist cadres. A Maoist district leader in Lalitpur allegedly declared that if the GON continued with such activities, Maoists would soon retaliate with force. Dipak Gurung, Spokesman for the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), responded that maintaining law and order is not violating the code of conduct.

MAOIST LEADER LIES ABOUT IGP'S MURDER

16. A Maoist leader in Sindhuli District participating in a roundtable conference on March 23 denied that the Maoists were involved in the brutal murders of Krishna Mohan Shrestha, Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, his wife and bodyguard (Ref B). His comments directly contradicted Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior-level Maoist leader and head of the Maoist negotiating team, who reportedly said his party accepted responsibility for the murders. Investigations into the killings concluded that they were part of a strategy of a special task force within the Maoist party to kill political, security and administrative chiefs (Ref C).

RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS UNDERWAY

17. Telephone service has been restored throughout the far-western regions, after being destroyed by Maoists during the insurgency. In Tehrathum District alone, Maoist attacks damaged close to thirty telephone lines, and in Dipayal District the insurgents severely disrupted phone service by destroying all the solar panels, antennas, wires and batteries. Many of the districts have been without telephone service for over a year.

MALINOWSKI